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WILD ANIMAL VERSES

MADE AT THE NEW YORK ZOOLOGICAL PARK

BY

A. M. CASTELLO

Class

Book

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WILD ANIMAL VERSES

Made at the New York
Zoological Park

A. M. CASTELLO

With Nine Illustrations
from the Zoological
Park Animal Collections

BROADWAY PUBLISHING CO.
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A. M. Castello

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PREFACE.

I am always glad to see good verses about wild animals. Of the up-to-date verses of the period, it seems to me that only a few can be understood or appreciated by a layman without a key. It is, therefore, rather refreshing to acquire a collection of Wild-Animal Rhymes that not only rhyme, but also make sense.

I think that all youngsters, as well as oldsters, will enjoy Mrs. Castello's droll verses about some of the most odd and interesting animals of the Zoological Park. Beyond a doubt these breezy verses, whose poetic feet adequately support them, will promote that appreciation of wild animals and their curious habits which is so necessary to the enjoyment of their acquaintance by mankind. It is my hope that these Wild-Animal Rhymes will be received in the same spirit of friendship for animals in which they have been composed.

W. T. HORNADAY.

August 22, 1913.

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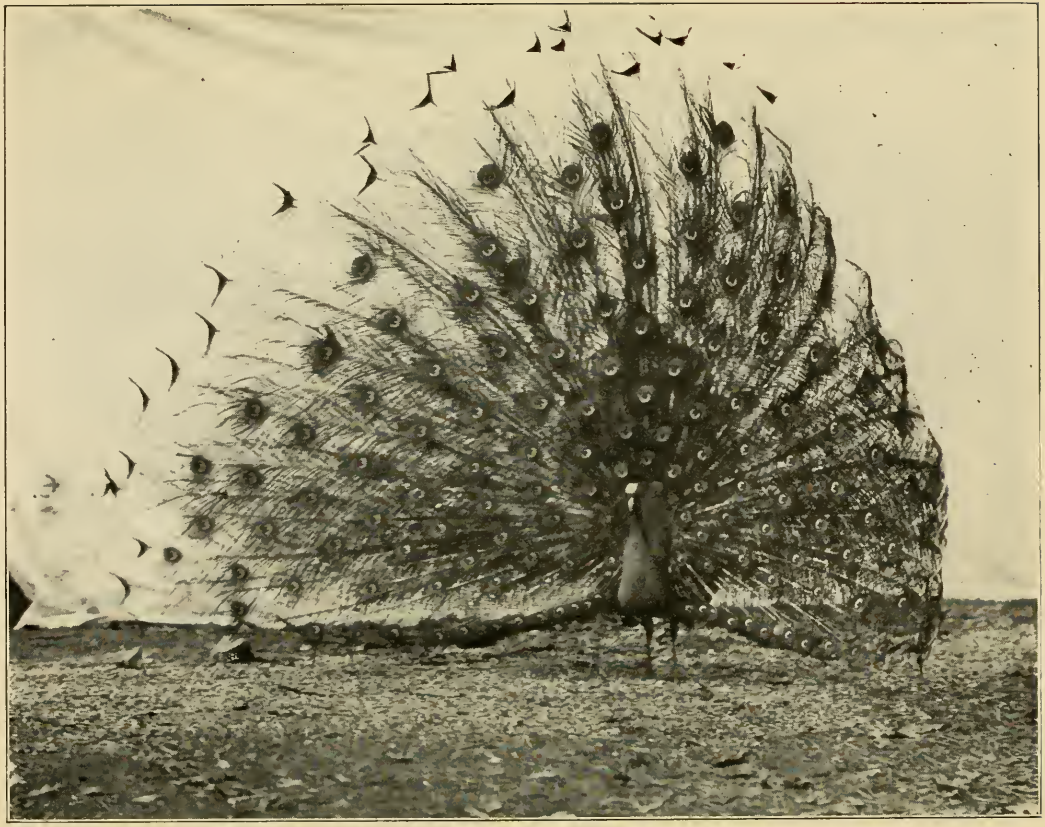

PEACOCK

Wild Animal Verses

THE PEACOCK'S TALE.

NOW usually I'm modest, a very quiet bird,
And even in my own defense, I seldom say a word;
Although I'm often tempted, and, like the ghost of old,
If I but had a proper chance, I could a tale unfold.
The public is ungrateful, that's a proverb, as you know.
It's true, for often I'm accused of doing things for show.

I'm just an ornamental bird and do the things I can,
I only seek to please you when I make my tail a fan;
But, when I spread and sail around before the gaping crowd,
This is the comment that I hear, "The peacock is so proud!"

And yet I've seen them run a block to catch a
glimpse of me,
And if I chance to drop a quill, how nimble they
can be;
They'll jump the fence and break the law—what
do you think of that?—
To get that feather from my tail to ornament a
hat.

EMUS

AN AUSTRALIAN SUFFRAGETTE.

THE emu is the strangest bird
That I have heard of yet,
But 'tis no wonder he's so queer,
His wife's a suffragette.
Long years ago, in other lands,
His lesson he was taught,
Before the Natural History men
Their first emu had caught.

Now, Mrs. Emu laid her eggs
All neatly side by side.
"I think I've done my duty now,"
She said with conscious pride.
"Here, Mr. Emu, 'tend these eggs,
I've other fish to fry.
Come, sit upon them, keep them warm;
I'll see you bye and bye."

Nearby there lived a relative,
Her Cousin Cassowary,
But Cassie seldom spoke to her,
She was exclusive, very.
So Mrs. Emu walked alone
Upon the shining sand,
Until of Sister Suffragettes,
She found a merry band.

[The Emu (habitant of Australia) is a very large bird, next in size to the ostrich, curiously interesting in appearance and habits. Among other peculiar characteristics, the male bird does the incubating.]

With these she played and hopped about,
And picked and ate her fill;
A very happy bird was she
Because she had her will,
Which was to leave that stupid nest
And through the woods to roam,
Attending clubs and banquets, too,
While hubby stayed at home.

Beside a bush a plover hen
Was sitting on her eggs;
She gravely rose and craned her neck,
And stretched her aching legs.
"What shiftless things these emus are,
Their homes they do neglect,
And to their mates I'm sure they show
But very poor respect."

Now, Mrs. Emu overheard
Just what the plover said;
It vexed her not a little,
And she proudly tossed her head.
"You stupid creature sitting there,
Why don't you fly away?
You don't assert the rights you have,
You've never had your day."

"I wouldn't have a mate like yours,"
The plover hen replied.
"Now mine's the finest bird on wings,

And I am satisfied.
So why do you come loitering round
To rob me of my rest?
I think myself you'd better be
A-sitting on your nest."

Then Mrs. Emu loudly laughed.
"You foolish thing," said she,
"Your mate's a vain and selfish bird.
Why, can't you see that he
Just preens and struts and flirts about
With other plovers' mates?
While mine, as any helpmeet should,
Stays home and incubates."

At this the plover hen arose
Upon her trembling legs,
So angry and excited,
She almost broke her eggs.
"I'd be ashamed if I were you
To talk like this," she cried;
"For you have no sense of duty
Nor any wifely pride.

"It has been proven that no male
Can keep his self-respect
While doing things his wife should do,
And being so hen-pecked."
Again the emu laughed with scorn,
"Who taught such things to you?

It was your husband, doubtless;
I've another point of view."

"I have some ideas of my own,
And one of them is this,
That what a bird has never had,
He'll surely never miss.
That mate of mine has never known
The joy of being free,
So he's content to mind the nest
And leave the world to me.

"Now, I think that's as it should be,
You think another way,
But some time you will change your mind,
At least I hope you may.
For when the world's turned upside down,
And then set right again,
I think you'll see the odds will be
In favor of the hen."

DAME BEAVER'S PROPHECY.

A BRAVE young beaver, many years ago,
Lay dreaming in the mud beside his home.
He watched with sullen gaze the slow stream's flow,
And sank his flat tail deeper in the loam.
"What, ho!" his mother cried. "Why mope you here?
Is this my son, the strongest of his tribe,
Who lays him down, ere yet the dawn is near?
To what shall I this listlessness ascribe?

"No teeth are sharper, and no eyes more bright,
None has a broader tail, or wiser head.
Of Beavertown you should be King by right,
And far beyond our dam your fame has spread."
"And what is fame?" the young Amphibian cried.
"What brings it me, but jealousy and hate?
My strength and skill which are your boast and pride,
To me seem nothing but a jest of fate.

"While I am planning architectural tricks,
And thinking of the great things to be done,

Note.—In the New York Zoo at Bronx Park, near the beaver pond, there is a tree showing the remarkable work done by the sharp teeth of these industrious little animals.

My neighbor builds a house of little sticks,
And claims the bride I thought myself had won."
"And such a bride!" Dame Beaver flapped her tail;
"A foolish creature, better lost than found.
Think not because of this that you shall fail
In greater things, my son; just look around.

"Mark yonder hut of twigs and rotten sticks;
Your neighbor and his mate live there and dream;
But when the freshet comes with cunning tricks,
They'll see their home fall shattered in the stream.
But you shall win renown for all our race,
Our industry a proverb shall become,
And men shall give your works an honored place,
Long after all your enemies are dumb.
"They'll write a record of your valiant deeds,
And passing crowds shall pause, to gaze and laud;
They'll note the house you built among the reeds,
And point in wonder to the tree you gnawed."

ALASKAN BROWN BEAR

WHEN THE BEARS RECEIVE THEIR RATIONS.

HIE away for the bear dens!
Here they come from nooks and glens,
From monkey house and goat hill,
See them coming, coming still,
From the valleys,
From the alleys,
With jests and merry sallies.
How they laugh and how they shout.
What is all this fuss about?
There's a keeper with a cart,
After him the children start;
How they hurry,
What a flurry,
'Mong the small boys, what a scurry.

And the grown-ups follow, too,
Just to see what he will do,
With that load of fish and bread;
For the bears must all be fed.
Loaves and fishes,
Without dishes,
Every bear gets all he wishes.
First are served the cunning cubs,
Then the lazy half-grown chubs,
Grizzlies, too, must have their share,
And the funny long-lipped bear.

Oh, you Bruin!
What a ruin
You make of fishes without stewin'.

On the bones they never choke,
But their bread they love to soak;
See them dip it in the pond,
Of soaked bread they're very fond.
Now, then, hello!
You greedy fellow,
In your coat of brownish yellow.
What! still reaching after more?
Why, already you have four
Goodly loaves, besides the fish.
Now I wonder if you wish
For bigger jaws,
And longer claws,
And to hold more in your paws.

Soon we'll see the small boys run,
They know where to find the fun.
Just a little bit below
There you'll see a funny show;
For down there
Is the clown bear,
The big Alaskan brown bear;
He'll stand up and wave his paws,
Clap them, too, and click his claws;
Bread and fish are flying free,

So he thinks 'tis time that he
Had his dinner,
He's a winner:
Gets just what he wants, the sinner.

He's a beast of splendid size,
And 'tis plain that he is wise,
For when others growl and whine,
He just makes some coaxing sign;
He's the rare sage
Of the bear cage,
Largest known bear of the age.
On the hill are smaller bear,
Some of which are very rare,
Though diminutive in size,
One of them looks very wise.
Glossy coated,
Snowy throated,
For his spectacles he's noted.

Down below is Silver King,
What a task it was to bring
This beast from the polar sea,
Where his life was wild and free.
'Tis reported
That he courted,
And among the icebergs sported,
All unmindful of the cold.
For within his white coat's fold
Wind or snow could do no harm;

Silver King was safe and warm.
Rightly named,
Greatly famed,
But he never can be tamed.

MR. BOWER BIRD'S WOOING.

HIS satin coat was shining
With iridescent hues,
And his little heart was pining
A pretty mate to choose.
So he began his wooing
By building of his bower—
It was his way of suing,
And he toiled for many an hour
A-hunting twigs and dragging
Them and setting them on end—
His spirits never flagging,
Though it was a task to bend
All those twigs to form the arches
Where he hoped his bride would play
With him in the merry marches
And run races all the day.

'Long came Miss Glossy Feather,
And peeped in rather shy.
"It's very pleasant weather!"
She murmured with a sigh.
Now his heart began to flutter
When he saw her standing there,
It almost made him stutter
When he answered, "Pret, pret-pr-itty fair."

[The Bower Bird, to attract his mate, constructs a bower by placing twigs on end, in rows, and binding the tops to form arches. Here he and the chosen one play together, chasing each other back and forth, in and out, between the rows of twigs, until the more serious work of building the nest begins.]

"You're building quite a pretty bower."
The builder swelled with pride.
"Well, if you can spare an hour,
Suppose you come inside;
I am pleased indeed to know you,
And flattered by your call.
I'll be very glad to show you
If you'll step into my hall."

"Oh, I don't know how to answer,
I haven't time today;
I hardly think I can, sir,
I must be on my way."
"Oh, 'twill only take a minute,
Just come in and rest a bit."
Slyly thinking, "Once she's in it,
Maybe she'll be loth to quit."
"I might help you!" she suggested.
"Oh, no, not at all," said he.
"But I'd like to," she protested.
Then he ventured to agree.
"What hues do you think most pleasing?"
Said she, "I am fond of blue."
"Well," he answered, slightly teasing,
"I must like what pleases you."

Thus began their life together,
Soon their bower was complete;
Then each brought a shell or feather
For the entrance trim and neat.

Objects bright and shells deserted
  Gathered they from far and near,
All their skill and strength exerted,
  For their bower had grown so dear.
Though 'twas but a place for courting,
  Built and furnished all for fun,
There they had some jolly sporting
  Ere their real work had begun.
But this play would soon be over,
  They must build their little nest,
There their brood to hatch and hover—
  This was after all the best.

EVERY DOE HAS HER DAY.

THE elk had shed his antlers
That had been his pride and boast,
And a pair of velvet nubbins
Were now the very most
That he could show for ornament
Upon his noble head;
His coat was rough and shabby,
And his glorious strength had fled.

The doe, anon so gentle,
Was mistress of the hour,
And it seemed to give her pleasure
To make him feel her power;
She butted him unmercifully,
And drove him from the glen,
And when he ventured to return
She butted him again.

This Delilah of the woods
Knew the weakness of her mate,
And quickly took advantage
Of his shorn and crippled state,

Note.—It is an almost unbelievable fact that elk, in common with moose and all other members of the deer family, shed their antlers every year. The old ones drop off in the spring and are quickly replaced by new ones, which at first are mere round knobs covered with a soft, velvety substance. They are very tender during this period, when they are said to be in velvet. And the animal becomes thin and weak as a result of the drain upon his system necessary to this remarkable production. He is quite at the mercy of the does, and they do not hesitate to avail themselves of the opportunity to play the tyrant, which at other seasons of the year is his prerogative.

AMERICAN ELK AT THE PARK

And shamelessly she mocked him
And derided his sad plight,
Till the persecuted beast
Found relief alone in flight.

But when the Autumn days were come
His strength returned again,
His splendid antlers towered
Above the heads of men;
He would have been a target
For some hunter's fatal shot
Had he not wisely made his home
In a sequestered spot.

The doe beside him meekly walked,
A docile creature, she,
For since the tables had been turned
Full well she knew that he
Would now assert his natural rights,
His will she must obey,
Nor did she once oppose him
Or dispute his right of way.

One evening when the shadows,
Long and black, began to fall,
The elk, upon a lofty crag,
Loomed skyward, grand and tall;
The doe was feeding just below,
Upon a grassy plot,
And feeling very peaceful
And contented with her lot.

When from out the creeping shadows
She heard a savage growl,
Then, from the darkening forest,
There came an answering howl;
Swift as a thought she bounded up
To where the great elk stood;
He placed himself before her
As a brave protector should.

A great, gaunt wolf with hungry snarls
Came clambering from the glen,
The elk impaled him on his horns
And hurled him back again;
His comrades stole around the rocks,
Behind the trembling doe,
But the champion wheeled upon them
And dealt them each a blow.

They were staggered for a moment,
But rallied from the shock,
And with energies redoubled
They scrambled up the rock.
For half the night he fought them,
Toward dawn they slunk away,
The daylight found him still on guard,
The doe beside him lay.

And when she wakened from her sleep
She looked on him with pride,
And springing quickly to her feet
Began to lick his side,

Where the hungry wolves had scratched him
With fierce and cruel claws,
But in her ministrations
She was soon compelled to pause.

For he shook his blood-stained antlers
And stamped one slender hoof,
And then he turned upon her
With a look of stern reproof:
"Remember how you taunted me,
When I was weak," said he;
"When my antlers were in velvet
And tender as could be.

"Well, were you kind and gentle then,
And patient? No, indeed!
And yet I have defended you
In this your time of need."
She hung her graceful head and sighed,
"I'm sorry for the wrong;
I did you in your feebleness,
Before your horns were strong."

And then she turned and walked away
With quietness and grace,
And as she went she thoughtfully
Reflected on the case:
"He rules me more than half the year,
Relentlessly, and so—
I'd better not be too subdued
And contrite," thought the doe.

ORIGIN OF THE FLYING FOX.
(FRUIT BAT)

BENEATH a fig tree longingly
A little red fox sat,
And gazed and gazed upon the figs,
And wished he were a bat,
Or any creature having wings,
That he might reach those figs
Which in the breeze bobbed temptingly
Upon their slender twigs.

A tiny bird, not half so large
As little Reynard, came
And ate so much and ate so long,
And seemed so very tame,
The wily fox began to think
He might make friends with her,
And so he waited patiently
And scarcely made a stir,

Until she hopped down on the ground,
And turned her head awry,
Looking so friendly and so kind,
He breathed a gentle sigh.
"I'd like some figs, myself," said he.
"Now you have had your fill,
Suppose you lend your wings to me—
I'll thank you if you will."

"Oh, mine are much too small," cried she;
"They're very fragile things,
Besides, how everyone would laugh
To see a fox on wings.
Take my advice and be content
With nature's plan for you;
Just take the food within your reach
As other foxes do."

Then Reynard laughed. "You're very wise
For one so small," said he.
"I might take *you,* for you are just
Within my reach, you see."
He made a spring, but up she flew
And perched upon a bough;
Then from this safe retreat looked down
And said, "I'll tell you how
You may possess the wings you crave,
Although I still maintain
'Twere better you should be content
A red fox to remain."

"So don't blame me in after years,
If this you should regret:
Just wait until the moon comes up,
And when the ground is wet,
Then stand upon your head and wish
Three times, with all your heart,
And keep on standing thus until
Your wings begin to start."

This time it was the bird who laughed
And flew away in glee.
Then Reynard pawed the ground and barked—
An angry fox was he.
"I'll never do that silly trick
Of standing on my head.
That bird must be a 'lyre' bird,
And every word she said
I know was false—and yet, perhaps,
'Twould do no harm to try;
No one would know it if I failed,
And I do long to fly."

There never was a prophecy
Made yet by man or bird
But some one half believed in it,
No matter how absurd.
So when the moon came rising up
From out her downy bed,
She laughed to see a little fox
A-standing on his head.
"Now, what's this for, you silly thing?
I fear you will take root."
"Oh, no, not root, but wings
I'll take, I'm bound to 'evolute.' "

"Well, since you are so determined,"
The laughing moon replied,
"Your faith shall be rewarded
And your wish be gratified.

But seeing you have gained your point,
While standing on your head,
Through life you'll go head downward,
Now mark what I have said."

And then the moon went sailing off,
For other work had she,
And Reynard rose on trembling wings—
A Flying Fox was he.
He had one happy moment,
But triumph cannot last;
His flying brought him soon to grief—
He found himself caught fast.

And when they brought him to the Zoo,
His was a curious case,
For being neither bird nor beast,
They found him hard to place.
But out of this predicament
Some wise head found a way:
"Let's put him in the reptile house,"
So there he is today.

Poor little fox without a tail,
Except a tale of woe,
For his handsome brush had vanished
When his wings began to grow.
This is his sorrow and his shame,
And this perhaps is why,
To hide himself within his wings,
He ever seems to try.

Head downward, by one foot he hangs,
For passers-by to view—
The oddest little animal
In all the great Bronx Zoo.

FLYING FOX
(Fruit Bat)

THE BABIES OF THE ZOO.

IN the day time, of the May time,
Oh, don't they have a gay time,
The darling little babies of the Zoo.
How they ramble, and they gamble,
And up the rocks they scramble—
The pretty spotted fawns, the lambs and kiddies, too.

And the funny, little bunny,
Like a bee in search of honey,
Darts about among the trees, from limb to limb.
And the very little, merry little, wary little fishes
Look just like streaks of sunshine when they swim.

In the by nooks, on the sly brooks,
With gentle quacks and shy looks
The little ducks go paddling all the day.
And the tall deer to the small deer
Says, "Be careful and don't fall, dear,
And it's very, very bad to run away."

When it's food time, what a good time,
And with some perhaps a rude time,
There is among the babies of the Zoo.
What a clatter! How they chatter! And we wonder what's the matter
'Till we're told that all this noise is nothing new.

What a waking, what a shaking,
And what hasty toilet making
There must be among the happy little birds,
When the warning light of morning
Shows them that the day is dawning,
And the park is filled with singing without words.
Now it's day time, and it's play time,
So let them have a gay time,
The cunning Teddy bears, and all the rest.
For it's light time,
But at night time, oh, that is just the right time,
For the babies all to creep to mother's breast.

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS.

THE lion was very hungry,
For days he'd had no food,
And a herd of moving spring-box
To him looked wondrous good.
'Twas a chance for which he had longed,
And had no mind to lose,
Only there were so many
He hardly knew how to choose.

They were moving from the barrens
To pastures new and green,
With a hungering and thirsting
That could be plainly seen;
They turned not to the right nor left,
So great their longings were,
And neither man nor lion
Could their fixed intent deter.

They saw naught and they heard naught
But the beating of their feet,
As they swept across the open
With a rhythm smooth and fleet.
The lion saw, and lashed his tail—
He looked a king indeed,
And a dainty meal of spring-box
Was all he seemed to need.

The Springbox (or Springbuck) is a species of antelope, habitant of Africa, that, when pressed by thirst, travels in a solid phalanx and with great rapidity toward some stream. It is said that lions are sometimes caught in the jam and carried along with the herd.

But he felt a greedy longing
To capture more than one,
To not only sate his hunger,
But to have a bit of fun.
His yellow eyes were gleaming,
As he glided toward the herd,
With the motion of a serpent
And the swiftness of a bird.

Instead of springing lightly
Upon the nearest doe,
He bounded in among them,
A fierce and deadly foe;
But they scarcely seemed to heed him,
So great was their desire
To quench the awful thirst within,
Which, like a raging fire,
Seemed driving them to madness
With a headlong, heedless gait,
And they closed upon the lion,
Regardless of their fate.
In vain he tried to roar, and to bite,
To scratch and claw.
He was crowded, crushed and jammed,
Till he could not raise a paw.

Said the lion to himself,
"Now I'm in a 'box' indeed!"
The king of beasts was suffering
The punishment of greed.

Without a single thrill of pride
The spring-box tore along,
Bearing their royal prisoner
In the middle of the throng.

They had no time to notice
His grandly flowing mane,
And whether he was king or serf
They did not care a grain.
And so they crushed and jostled
Him, and trampled on his feet,
Until he felt a nausea at
The thought of spring-box meat.

His thirst for blood was also gone,
He had one only hope,
That something soon would happen
To this herd of antelope—
A hunter's shot or anything
To break this awful pack,
For he was getting dizzy,
And things around looked black.

At last it came, a sudden break,
The herd flew wide apart;
The smell of water was the cause
That gladdened every heart.
With leaps and bounds they sought the stream—
The lion stood amazed
To find himself alone and free,
Though bruised and somewhat dazed.

The spring-box wallowed in the stream,
  And drank and drank again;
The lion turned his wilted tail
  And fled across the plain,
And in the darkened jungle sought
  A place in which to lie
And lick his disappointed chops,
  And eat his humble pie.

LAMENT OF THE TASMANIAN DEVIL.

THE Tasmanian Devil repined in his cage,
For his heart was near bursting with impotent rage;
All the luxuries provided he looked on with scorn,
Then gave himself over to musings forlorn.
His keepers were worried to see him so sad,
And with tidbits attempted to make his heart glad;
But the creature's dull eyes looked reproachfully out
On the curious loungers who sauntered about,
And who sometimes would loiter to read his queer name,
And, "Tasmanian Devil!" they'd always exclaim.
Then they'd look on this queer little beast in amaze,
As they read of his savage and terrible ways.
In his far away home in Tasmanian wilds,
Where his heart had been happy, and light as a child's;
If he preyed upon others of lesser degree,
It was only as nature had made him to be—
And no worse than the mildest of humans who eat
Little chickens and lambs because they are sweet.

He had played with his fellows, and never once guessed
That his fate was a different one from the rest.
A nocturnal terror, though a sluggard by day,
In the darkest of wilds he had captured his prey.
But 'twas not till he dwelt in his cage at the Zoo
That he learned what remarkable things he could do.
And his name, though he never had heard it till then,
Was the wickedest name ever known among men.
Well, was this then the reason that kept him apart?
Was it sorrow for sin made him heavy of heart?
No, alas, it was not, and his neighbor next door
Could have told you, perhaps, why this beast was so sore,
For she heard him lamenting by night on his bed,
And she caught the sad words which the poor devil said:
"I have found out my name, and my nature, I'm told,
Is ferocious and savage, unless well controlled;
But in name and in fame little comfort I find,
If they cannot be known to my kin and my kind.
Oh, if one would but go to my friends o'er the sea
And just tell what a devil I've gotten to be!"

THE AOUDAD FAMILY

THE AOUDAD FAMILY.

DO you know the Aoudad Family, now living at the Zoo?
There are quite a goodly number, but once there were but two.
And I suppose there was a time when there was only one,
But he found that single blessedness was very lonely fun.
So with flowing beard he sauntered to neighbor Aoudad's gate,
And sheepishly requested little Nannie for his mate.
But his neighbor answered sadly that she was very young—
Perhaps they'd better wait awhile. Then up Miss Nannie sprung,
But not with haste immodest, she minced down to the gate—
In her vocabulary there was no such word as wait.
And when her father asked her, "When will you wed this Aoudad?"
She tilted up her pointed chin and promptly answered, "Now, Dad."

So now they dwell in grandeur in their mansion at the Zoo,
And they've added to their household Billy Aoudad No. 2;

And this Billy is precocious, New Yorker to the core
An up-to-date young Aoudad, who knows a great deal more
Than his horned and bearded father, whose long mane sweeps the hills,
And like many other youngsters likes to do what ere he wills.
When once he had been cutting some capers rather bad,
His father turned upon him, with visage long and sad.
"I never did in all my life such foolish things," quoth he;
"I never even learned such tricks; they shock and anger me."

"Oh, then, you've lost just half your life," cried saucy Billy Aoudad.
"You surely don't know what you've missed. Come on, I'll show you how, Dad."

COCKATOO AND GALLINULE.

ON the far Australian shore,
Two thousand miles away and more.
Beside a glassy, ferny pool,
Lived a pretty Gallinule,
Chattering, happy, little thing,
Light of heart and soft of wing.
A leadbeater Cockatoo
In a tall tree lived there, too;
Snowy plumed and crimson crested,
Very grand and proud was he,
Ruddy winged and rosy vested,
Sitting in his chosen tree,
Like some lofty potentate,
In his costly robes of state.

Modest little Gallinule,
Looking shyly in the pool,
Saw her own reflection there,
Felt that she could not compare
With this splendid Cockatoo.
Hardly knowing what to do
Hid herself behind some weeds,
Creeping off among the reeds.
Softly laughed the bird above her,
"I can see you, little fool;
Oh, you can't hide from your lover,
Pretty, pretty Gallinule."

Vexed, but flattered, stood she still,
Strong of heart, though weak of will.

Would he speak to her again?
Was she really pretty then?
That grand bird had called her so;
He was wise and ought to know.
Soon the voice of Cockatoo
Thrilled her foolish heart anew.
"Come up here and sit by me,
Strange and wondrous sights you'll see.
Ah, but now I do recall
Gallinules have feeble wings.
Nothing worse could me befall
Than if mine were useless things.

"But, say, pretty Gallinule,
Now, why don't you go to school?
Go to school and learn to fly,
Then you'll be as grand as I.
You shall come and live with me,
Up here in my leafy tree;
This is just the place for you,
Here beside your Cockatoo.
Then, some time when all in feather,
And there's sweetness in the air,
We will fly away together—
Won't we be a gorgeous pair?"
Sighed the wily Cockatoo.
"Gallinule, I want but you!"

Trembling little Gallinule
Stole back softly to the pool,
Half submitting to her fate;
Then she thought about her mate.
He was very handsome, too,
In his glossy coat of blue,
And his red and jaunty hat.
How her heart went pit-a-pat,
Thinking of her mate and lover,
  Wondering what she'd better do,
While among the boughs about her,
  Waited doting Cockatoo,
Murmuring half in ridicule,
"Pretty little Gallinule!"

Creeping through the undergrowth
Came some hunters, caught them both,
Tempter and the tempted, too;
Now they both are at the Zoo.
You can see them any day
That you chance to pass that way.
One is in the house exotic,
One is in the cage aquatic;
One has learned to say, "Good-morning."
  This you know is Cockatoo.
The other gives a note of warning
  (Though perhaps 'tis nothing new),
As she basks beside the pool—
This, you know, is Gallinule.

WHAT THE HORNED OWL THOUGHT ABOUT IT.

ONCE a barnyard hen hatched a red-headed duck,
And a troublesome chick was he,
For when she would call to him, "Cluck, cluck, cluck,"
Did he heed her at all? Not he.
He was very proud of his neck feathers green,
And the impudent curl of his tail,
And his bright cap of red was a sight to be seen
When over the pond he would sail.

His little hen sister and little cock brother
He regarded as plain and obscure,
While the cackles and clucks of his kind foster-mother
He found very hard to endure.
Now one day this duck, who was really a drake,
Caught a gaudy winged, great butterfly.
"Oh, please let me go; if my life you should take
The king of all insects would die."

Then loud laughed the drake as he pulled off a wing,
"Why, once you were naught but a worm,
And, now who are you, to proclaim yourself king?
No wonder you wriggle and squirm."

"Croak, croak!" cried a frog on the bank overhead,
"Mr. Drake, to inform you, I beg,
That while it is true what you just now have said,
You yourself were once only an egg."

"And you," sneered the drake, "I remember the time
When you were a tadpole small;
You wiggled about in the mire and slime,
With never a leg at all."
Then the great horned owl, wakened out of his sleep
By the querulous chatter below,
From a hole in his tree took a curious peep,
And muttered, "Now this is all so,

"You are each of you right in what you have said,
So you may as well laugh and agree.
Let the things of the past be as though they were dead,
For so it seems wisest to me,
It matters but little just what you were once—
Caterpillars or catamounts,
An egg or a worm, a tadpole or dunce—
It's what you are now that counts."

A NOBLE CAPTIVE.

NOW comes His Grace, the Secretary Bird,—
Though to my mind the name is quite absurd;
Those graceful quills which ornament each ear
Were never meant for usefulness, I fear.
A titled courtier of old times he looks—
A knight stepped out of ancient picture books.
The stateliest bird in all the Zoo is he;
Like some great general in captivity.
He marches back and forth with measured stride,
And views the passing crowd with injured pride.
No common prisoner he, but one of state,
As his attire would plainly indicate.
His rank and times are set forth by his clothes,
His breeches of black velvet, and his hose,
Long, pink and silken on his slender legs,
And now his satin coat your favor begs;
Dove colored, soft, and of a texture fine;
A grandee looks he going out to dine.

This Secretary Bird, as he is named,
Must have antecedents, greatly famed.

The Secretary Bird is one of the most remarkable dwellers in the Ostrich House at the Zoo. He is noted in his native country (Africa) as a snake killer, his attacks being made with the feet, never with the beak.

The long cockades of black feathers falling backward at each side of the head are said to have suggested the name, Secretary Bird, from a fancied resemblance to a quill stuck behind the ear.

SECRETARY BIRD

Some of their zeal may have been handed down,
For he himself is not without renown;
The great St. George, of dragon-killing fame,
May be his patron saint, for this bird's game
Is killing snakes, and if you watch you'll see
With what dispatch, and what dexterity,
A blow of death his quick strong foot can deal
To any luckless creature that may steal
In unsuspecting trust across his path,
And thus he feeds his hunger, or his wrath.

Now, if in transmigration you believe,
'Twould not be hard, a fancy to conceive,
That when the dragon-killing saint expired,
His mighty soul with valiant deeds inspired
In one of this bird's ancestors had found
A new abode, and when on looking round,
He saw no dragons, still not to be foiled,
He kept on searching till a snake uncoiled
Close at his feet. His brave heart gave a leap,
And, like a warrior wakened out of sleep,
He charged the serpent, and with one swift stroke
Of his strong, slender foot he bruised and broke
The head and neck, and from that thrilling hour
None dared dispute his special right and power
To rid his land of snakes and serpents vile,
As did St. Patrick for the Emerald Isle.

THE CHIPMUNK.

TWO children with their mother
Were visiting the Zoo,
But finally of walking
They very tired grew;
And so they sought a shady place,
A quiet road beside,
But scarcely were they seated
When the little maiden cried:

"O mother, see that cunning thing!
What is it? There he goes!"
"Why, that's a chipmunk," said the boy.
"Look out, he'll get your toes.
"Here, Bunny! Here is something good."
He tossed a peanut out.
The chipmunk sat up stiff and straight,
Then swiftly whirled about.

The peanut quickly disappeared
Within his little pouch,
And he bobbed up for another
Without even saying Ouch!
The little girl with pitying eyes
His pouch distended saw.
"Poor thing!" she cried, "he's got the mumps,
Just see his swollen jaw!"

"The mumps, indeed! but on one side,"
Then loudly laughed her brother;
"Now we'll just swell the other side.
Here, Bunny, here's another."
The second peanut Bunny caught
And stuffed it in his cheek.
The little girl now saw the trick,
And laughed till she was weak.

"He swallows peanuts, shells and all!
You greedy little bunny,
I never did in all my life
See anything so funny."

THE MAKING OF A LEADER.

IN the far off Northern country
Lived Johnnie Caribou,
A merry little youngster he,
With nothing else to do
But to run beside his mother,
Scampering through the wood,
Feasting upon moss and lichens,
Which are his natural food.

But one day Mother Caribou said,
"Johnnie, we must go
To the school down in the clearing,
A mile or two below."
Now, Johnnie knew about this school,
He'd been there once before,
Though only as a looker-on,
He knew what was in store.

So 'twas half in expectation,
And more than half in dread,
That he left off eating lichens
And followed where she led.
Sometimes he lagged a little,
But his mother had a way
Of looking calmly round at him;

[A description of the above incident is to be found in the National Library of Stone and Cram.]

She had no need to say,
"Come, Johnnie! now then, hurry up,
Or you'll be late to school."

For Johnnie knew her wisdom,
And submitted to her rule.
They were early at the clearing,
But others soon arrived,
And bashful master Caribou
Ungallantly contrived
To hide behind his mother
And another stately dame
From the curious gaze of strangers
He could not even name.

There were six or seven mothers,
And youngsters half a score;
The old ones quickly stepped behind,
And the young ones placed before,
Pushing them into the center,
With purpose wise and good,
That they all might know each other,
As young relations should.
Well, they showed their dispositions,
And some their training, too,
In this their first real lesson
In the school for Caribou.
Some of them were very timid,
And others were quite bold.
Master John was rather shy,

But resolved his own to hold;
And when a young buck ducked his head,
With mischief in his look,
Undaunted, Johnnie Caribou
The challenge quickly took.

It was just a playful skirmish,
A lively bit of fun,
A lesson, too, in butting,
So you see no harm was done.
"Well, now, the second lesson
We must have," the leader said.
She started off, and all the rest
Soon followed where she led.
The mothers loping at her heels,
The little ones behind,
Not knowing where the race would end,
Or what they were to find.

Ambitious Johnnie Caribou,
More agile than the rest,
Soon headed all the little ones,
Resolved to do his best.
But he was not quite prepared
For the trick the leader played,
When she jumped a fallen tree,
And the others, undismayed,
Followed her till all the mothers
Were on the other side.
"Ba-a-a-h!" cried Johnnie Caribou,
Forgetting all his pride.

He felt a sudden bump behind,
The next in line had come
To send poor Johnnie sprawling,
For the moment stricken dumb.
But there still was valiant stuff
In young Johnnie Caribou,
Who now resolved to be the first
That jumping trick to do.

Then he rose and looked around him,
And was surprised to see
That his mates had joined their mothers
By running round the tree!
"That's a coward's trick," he said,
But said it very quiet,
And afterwards he added,
"I guess I'd better try it."

But the old ones were persistent,
They all lined up again;
The youngsters *had* to jump that log
Ere they could leave the glen.
And so Johnnie Caribou
Had a chance to show his pluck—
He soon was at the head again
By either choice or luck.

He plucked up all his courage
To be ready at the start,
And ran behind his mother

With a wildly beating heart;
And when he saw her lope that log
He knew that he was "next."
He hadn't time to say a prayer
Or to repeat a text,
But with his head and tail erect
He vaulted o'er that tree;

And all the others followed—
'Twas a pretty sight to see.
"Bravo, Johnnie Caribou!"
He seemed to hear them say.
They recognized their leader
And followed him from that day.

THE PHEASANTS

IF you would see a gorgeous sight,
Then some day when it's pleasant,
Just take the pathway to your right,
And walk beyond
The wild fowl pond
To the aviary of the pheasant.

There you will see the richest hues
In rare design ensembled,
The brightest reds, the deepest blues,
Golden yellow,
Warm and mellow,
To the sunset oft resembled.

AND THIS IS FAME.

A ZEBRA and an ostrich, side by side,
Were walking on the desert's burning sand.
"Oh, I am sick of this," the Zebra cried;
"I'm tired of this dull and lonely land.
I'd like to be where people come and go;
Somewhere there must be more congenial climes.
I think you'll own that Africa is slow;
Our country is indeed behind the times."

The Zebra surely was a handsome sight,
His coat was very striking to behold,
His stripes were very black and very white,
And laid on in a pattern rather bold;
But to his Ostrich friend he often sighed—
The Ostrich ever lent a patient ear—
"One might as well be plain, or even pied.
What use are all my handsome stripes out here?

"They say there is a place across the sea,
Where I would be much prized and so would you;
Where people come from everywhere to see
The animals. That place is called the Zoo!"

ZEBRAS

"Pride goeth forth in stripes," his friend replied;
"Now, I would not go there, for I am told
They'd take my finest feathers from each side
And sell them to their merchant men for gold."
The Zebra laughed, "That wouldn't hurt you much,
You always have to shed them anyway.
I've heard those folks have very gentle touch,
And treat all beasts with kindness, so they say."

"Well, if they capture you we'll have to part,"
The Ostrich said, "for I shall use my speed;
I'll have to leave you, though 'twill break my heart.
To being caught I am averse indeed."
And so it happened when the hunters came,
The Ostrich fled without a backward glance;
The frightened Zebra would have done the same
Despite his boastings if he'd had a chance.

His wish to travel soon was gratified.
He found himself surrounded by the sea,
And, strange to say, he felt quite satisfied,
For he'd discovered what his fate would be;
Though how he learned the secret no one knew,
But he had heard somehow mysteriously
That he was destined for the great Bronx Zoo!

When there arrived, a peaceful life he led,
His wants were all attended to each day,
His longings for publicity were fed,

For crowds of curious people passed his way.
"I wish my Ostrich could be here," he sighed
"To see how all these people gaze at me.
He might, perhaps, regret his having tried
So very hard to keep his liberty."

A stranger came to little "New York town"
From way out West, a little to the south.
He sought the Zoo, and wandered up and down,
And gazed about him with both eyes and mouth.
The Zebra saw him coming with a friend,
A city man who pointed out each sight,
And who with conscious learning sought to lend
An added interest and to shed new light
Upon this darkened mind from "Way out West."
"This Zebra here is quite a prize,
And of his kind, one of the very best."
The Zebra saw with pride the stranger's eyes
Upon him fastened with a wondering stare,
And then suspicion crept into that look.
Beneath his breath the woodsman seemed to swear;
His grizzled head the skeptic slowly shook.

"Now, I suppose you think that I'm a fool,
But you will find you've made a great mistake;
Some scalawag has painted up a mule,
That Zebra critter's just a natural fake."
"Now," thought the Zebra, "this is very hard,

Thus to be stolen from your native land,
And when you think you're going to be starred
As something very wonderful and grand,
Then just to hear a puddin'-headed cad
Make such remarks about your honesty as that;
Well, I must say, I think it's pretty bad,
And makes a fellow feel most awful flat.

"One thing alone consoles me for that speech—
It can't be heard by those I hold most dear.
I'm thankful they are all beyond its reach,
And now I'm glad my Ostrich isn't here!"

THE EGRET.

AN egret stood alone upon a rock,
A still, white sentinel of wondrous grace,
The sole survivor of a dreadful shock,
A splendid scion of a passing race.
How could he understand why he was left
Alone of all that happy, hopeful band—
Why of his mate and little ones bereft,
He had escaped the devastating hand.

The ermine clouds that splotched the tender blue
Stretched out their restful shadows o'er the plain,
And rills invisible went singing through the reeds
And sedges with a sad refrain.
The hush of death seemed hanging in the air,
The snowy egret sank his drooping head,
For though the plain still lay as green and fair
As if it held no traces of the dead,
Too well he knew that 'neath the bending grass
Unburied forms in soft white garments lay,
Victims of vanity and greed, alas!
And of the law's long pitiless delay.
His gentle soft-winged mate among the rest
Had fallen wildly fluttering to the ground,
A warm red stain upon her snowy breast
Showed that a fatal shot her heart had found.

Her little ones for food had vainly cried,

Until at last their piteous cries were hushed;
Their shapeless forms told plainly how they'd
died,
'Neath ruthless human feet they had been
crushed.
And other little ones were doomed to meet
A fate less kind, poor, starving, helpless things,
They but escaped those hurrying, heedless feet
To die from want of food and sheltering wings.

Beside their nest the parent birds lay dead,
Stripped of those plumes for which they had
been sought,
And which through envy to their death had led—
Plumes that fair women thoughtlessly had
bought
And proudly worn, unmindful of the pain,
The cruel torture, and the swift decrease
By countless numbers from their nesting plain
Of nature's wondrous avian masterpiece.

The lovely egrets now almost extinct,
Once swept in snowy clouds the southern
glades;
But selfish vanity with avarice linked
Has wrought their ruin by repeated raids.
Too late the law has roused to their defence,
Too late have fashion's followers learned their
shame,
For wanton slaughter knows no recompense—
The egret of our land is but a name.

THE SWAN SONG.

IN a far-away land by a still gray pond,
A white swan dwelt with her brood,
And her daily task was a mission fond,
To provide her young with food.
And she tenderly loved the soft white things,
Though she spoke no word at all,
And watchfully gathered beneath her wings
Each cygnet, timid and small.

Their nest was built among sedges and weeds,
And they basked in the yellow loam;
They played with each other among the reeds,
And knew no place but their home.
A choir of song birds fluttered and sang
In the trees that sheltered their nest,
But the voice of their own mother never rang
In lullabies over their rest.

In their down-covered hearts they wondered why
She never sang them to sleep,
But oft when they heard some lullaby,
Under her wings they would creep,
For they knew her breast was dearest of all,
Though she silently brooded above,
No bird in the trees, so grand and tall,
Could give them such wonderful love.

But once when the sun was going away,
A-slipping down out of the sky,
When a pale blue mist on the gray pond lay,
They heard a low, soft cry.
'Twas their mother's own voice they knew,
When they heard the first sweet note,
And with outstretched wings to her side they flew
To catch each sound from her throat.

And the birds overhead grew strangely still,
While that new voice sweetly rang,
For every heart felt a tender thrill,
And this is the song she sang:

Song.

"Somewhere there's a river of golden light,
As smooth as the sky above;
Some time to that river I'll take my flight
With the little ones that I love.
And no one will ever disturb us there,
On that river of golden light.
Just loving each other shall be our care,
And I'll sing you to sleep each night."

The song was short, but O! it was sweet,
And the little ones drew more near,
A snowy circle around her feet;
And they trembled with tender fear.

When across the pond the morning broke,
And the sky shone gold and red,
And the cygnets out of their slumber woke,
The mother was cold and dead.
A gloom o'er the summer woods seemed cast,
And hushed were the birds above;
That one sweet song was her first and last—
'Twas a song of mother-love.

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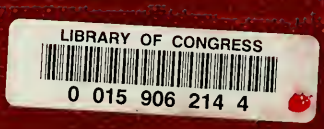
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